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ABSTRACT

The Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (PALPIN) was developed to improve the practice of adult literacy teachers, tutors, and program administrators throughout Pennsylvania. The project to develop PALPIN was initiated in 1995-1996. The primary objectives for the PALPIN project's third program year were as follows: adapt and refine the conceptual framework that had underpinned the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Project in Philadelphia; build the capacity of individual practitioners and programs to implement practitioner inquiry as a staff development strategy; cultivate practitioner inquiry leadership around the state so that the spread of inquiry as an approach to professional development would not always be dependent on Philadelphia-based expertise; support and strengthen a statewide network of practitioners engaged in inquiry activities; and work toward a model for statewide delivery of practitioner inquiry as a professional development model. During PALPIN's 1997-1998 program year, a northwest/southwest inquiry group was established, a 4-day Fall Inquiry Institute was conducted for practitioners throughout the state, a leadership institute was developed and implemented to foster inquiry leadership development, PALPIN's on-line telecommunication capabilities were expanded significantly, a midwinter PALPIN conference was held, and a guide to support practitioners (the "Inquiry Facilitator's Handbook) was developed. (MN)

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The Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network: Building Capacity, Strengthening Links

Final Report for
Program Year 1997-1998

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98-8019

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ABSTRACT

Project No.: 98-8019

Grant Recipient: University of Pennsylvania, 3700 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19035. (898) 8865. belzera@aol.com

Program Name: Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network: Building Capacity, Strengthening Links

Grant Allocation: $94,208 (includes funding for PEDIG)

Project Period: July 1997 - June 1998 **Project Director:** Alisa Belzer

Project Purpose: The PALPIN project was designed to improve the educational opportunities of adult learners by improving the practice of teachers, tutors and program administrators. Our goal was to accomplish this by establishing a cross-state inquiry group during the PALPIN Fall Inquiry Institute and inquiry groups in all six professional development regions which would encourage practitioners to raise and investigate questions and issues meaningful to their day-to-day practice. In this third year of the project, PALPIN also worked to expand access to inquiry-based professional development and provide formal leadership development opportunities.

Project Outcomes: The outcomes of the third year of PALPIN were not significantly different than in previous years. The 1995-96 Final Report focused on participant reported impact of participating in inquiry groups. These included becoming more reflective and problem solving about work; changing and initiating new practices, perceptions and interactions about and with learners and colleagues; and participating in a professional/ intellectual community. These outcomes were determined through analyzing final inquiry projects, response sheets collected at the end of each meeting, and an end-of-year survey.

The 1996-97 Final Report outcomes section focused on an analysis of the nature of participants' inquiries. In every case, projects represented as a primary concern a sincere interest in improving classroom practice, program management and structures and/or service delivery. Inquiry questions grew out of interests, needs and concerns in participants' day-to-day practice and reflected the uniqueness of their work-places, job positions, students served, class levels and subject areas taught. Yet, the projects also reflected some common themes, interests and concerns. These included gathering information from learners or colleagues to inform changes in practice, gaining a deeper understanding of learners' experiences or perceptions, understanding what happens when an innovation is implemented, or investigating a particular problem to understand it better (thus leading to implications for change).

Please see the 1996 and 1997 PALPIN Final Reports for details on these outcomes.

Project Impact: Ongoing and in-depth opportunities for writing about and discussing relationships among issues and questions in day-to-day work, needs and interests of participants and readings from the research literature supported practitioners in exploring meaningful questions about their practice. These questions were addressed using both collaborative and individual inquiry strategies and included the completion of inquiry projects using descriptive research methods.

Product or Training Developed: Fall Inquiry Institute, Inquiry Leadership Institute, Regional Inquiry Groups, Inquiry 101. Practitioner Inquiry Projects. Inquiry Facilitators Handbook.

Products Available From: Alisa Belzer

Project Continuation and/or Future Implications: In an effort to make inquiry-based professional development more accessible to practitioners, PALPIN will offer "mini-institutes" (two-day introduction with two one-day follow-up sessions) three times to serve five regions. An Inquiry Leadership Institute will again be offered to continue the process of building capacity around the state for using inquiry as a form of professional development.

Conclusion/Recommendations: Innovations during the third year of the project--a leadership institute and a program-based introduction to inquiry--as well as the growth of PALPIN, have yielded the following observations: 1) While there is a substantial amount of interest in assuming leadership roles among PALPIN participants, there are significant obstacles to doing so; 2) Although the intensity and continuity of inquiry group experiences is a unique and powerful feature of this professional development opportunity, shorter, less extensive inquiry opportunities also seem to have benefits; and 3) Professional development initiatives like PALPIN will have increasing difficulty with recruitment in a professional development system that has many mandated or strongly recommended activities. It will be important in the coming years to find ways to break down obstacles to participation by making this approach to professional development increasingly congruent with the realities of the workforce. Meanwhile, it is appropriate to imagine ways to integrate inquiry into other forms of professional development to allow for more efficient expenditures of time in this area.

Additional Comments: The process of building a state-wide network of practitioners who use inquiry to improve their individual practice, their programs and the wider field continued to grow during PALPIN's third year. Recruitment efforts, although a struggle, yielded an increase in participation, goals were met or exceeded, project completion rate was high, and leadership development continued.

Introduction

During its third year of operation, the Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (PALPIN) continued to pursue the same general goals it had during its first two years of existence. These included 1) adapting and refining a conceptual framework which had under-girded the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Project (ALPIP)--a local (Philadelphia), cross-program, urban practitioner inquiry community--to fit the needs, interests and capacities of practitioners and programs representing a diverse set of literacy organizations around the state, 2) building the capacity of individual practitioners and programs to implement practitioner inquiry as a staff development strategy, 3) cultivating practitioner inquiry leadership around the state such that the spread of inquiry as an approach to professional development would not ultimately be dependent on Philadelphia-based expertise in the future, 4) supporting and strengthening a state-wide network of practitioners engaged in inquiry activities and 5) working toward a model for state-wide delivery of practitioner inquiry as a professional development opportunity.

PALPIN grew out of a number of inquiry-based staff development projects for literacy educators in Philadelphia. Inquiry-based staff development is defined as:

> staff development in which participants focus on (1) conducting 'systematic, intentional inquiry into teaching, learning and administration by practitioners in their own program settings' (adapted from Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991); (2) organizing inquiry as a social and collaborative process; (3) critically analyzing current theory and research from a field-based perspective; and (4) making problematic the social, political, and cultural arrangement that structure literacy learning and teaching in particular contexts. Inquiry-centered staff development starts from two key assumptions: that research by practitioners can contribute to both individual professional development and immediate program effectiveness and that these inquiries have the potential to enhance and alter, not just add to, the wider knowledge base of the field (Lytle, Belzer and Reumann, 1992).

A wide range of strategies and activities to support inquiry-based staff development are possible, but all involve interaction with colleagues and the research literature, processes for articulating inquiry questions, close observation and documentation of practice, making problematic the social, cultural, cognitive and political arrangements that structure literacy learning and teaching in particular contexts and continuous reassessment of one's own

knowledge. When practitioners conduct inquiries, they raise questions about what they think they know, see and do in their classrooms and programs. Therefore practitioner inquiry is not simply a staff development technique, but encourages people to take a stance on knowledge and professional practice in which they are continually learning and generating new understandings about literacy and learning for themselves, other practitioners in their programs and the wider field. In other words, while practitioner inquiry supports the use of particular strategies (e.g. implementation of inquiry projects), the overall goal is to provide a process that encourages practitioners to view their work in new, deeper and/or more highly nuanced and complex ways. Regardless of whether practitioners continue to complete formal inquiry projects in subsequent years, the ultimate goal for this kind of staff development is that they will have a set of strategies and ways of inquiring into their work that can be integrated into their practice in the future.

Practitioner inquiry groups in Philadelphia (initiated in 1991) have followed different formats and procedures over the years, but all have had the common characteristics listed above. That is, they support the development of professional community; the work of the groups and individuals grows out of the day-to-day realities, needs and interests of participants; they empower practitioners to take control of their own learning and encourage them to take responsibility for making change; and they generate new knowledge for the field (Lytle, Belzer, Cantafio and Reumann, unpublished manuscript). The challenge in implementing PALPIN has been to find ways to build and sustain inquiry communities in diverse contexts using formats that were uniquely suited to those places and practitioners, yet maintain the critical features that define inquiry as staff development.

The sequence, intensity and particulars of implementation and focus or topic of inquiry groups varies considerably depending on the local context. However, they all tend to have a common set of activities. These include a range of activities involving reading, writing, and talking about practice in relationship to research literature (including

practitioner inquiry projects). They are usually collaborative in nature and serve to develop professional community, create a culture of inquiry and critique, and provide opportunities to learn about and share new ideas for practice. Typically such "collaborative inquiries" are used as a starting point for the development of individual inquiry projects which consist of the development of an inquiry question, data collection, data sharing (a structured way of getting feedback and multiple perspectives on an aspect of the inquiry project), data analysis and writing.

The overall objectives for this third year of the project included establishing inquiry activities in every region of the state (an expansion of service delivery over previous years), running a four-day Fall Inquiry Institute which was open to all practitioners in the state, and developing and implementing a Leadership Institute to foster inquiry leadership development. As a support to leadership development, a resource book was planned. There was a continuing effort, as well, to link practitioners within the network to others who share a commitment to using inquiry as a way to improve practice. Each of these major aspects of the project was executed. The following report details program design and activities, what can be learned from the process for the future, and a restatement of outcomes observed in previous years of program activity.

Project Design and Activities

1. Regional Inquiry Groups

    a. Northwest/Southwest

Planning: A joint planning committee was formed for the Northwest and Southwest regions. The planning committee was made up of PDC staff, current PALPIN participants (all of whom had attended the 1997 Winter Inquiry Institute), program administrators from key agencies in the regions and the PALPIN project director. This committee agreed that PALPIN would be a collaborative activity of the two regions. The group also made tentative plans regarding design and content for the regional group. Much of this planning was contingent upon the geographical location of participants. It was

assumed that because the combined regions cover a relatively large area, there would be a combination of a few whole-group meetings and several small group meetings composed of participants who work in close proximity. The committee also discussed strategies for differentiating practitioner inquiry from action research activities. Because the Pennsylvania Action Research Network (PA-ARN) had been especially active in these regions for several years, there was concern that potential participants in a PALPIN group were already tapped out and/or that it would not be clear what PALPIN could offer participants that had not already been made available to them by participating in PA-ARN.

As with other meetings of this nature in previous years, the gathering provided an opportunity for planning, and also gave the PALPIN project director an opportunity to get to know some of the unique features of these regions. This kind of information is critical for tailoring the practitioner inquiry activities to the local needs of participants in the Northwest and Southwest regions.

Recruitment and application process: Recruitment for the regional inquiry group had three components. Through collaboration between the PALPIN project director and the PDC staff a flier was developed to describe the general features of practitioner inquiry and to layout the specific plans for a regional group. Piggy-backing on another event (a vendor fair), practitioners were invited to attend a lunch and introduction to Learning from Practice activities. Here, they were able to learn about both PA-ARN and PALPIN from project organizers and participants. As part of this introduction to PALPIN, a commonly used inquiry activity was implemented allowing several attendees (some participated, some watched, fish-bowl style) to have a small taste of what happens in inquiry groups. Word of mouth, an informal recruitment strategy, was also used.

Interested practitioners from around the region completed an application which included questions regarding current and past work experience in the field as well as two short essay questions. In addition, applicants were required to submit a recommendation and commitment form from their immediate supervisors. This application, developed by

PDC staff, was a modification of the PALPIN application and allowed participants to apply for either the regional group or the Fall Inquiry Institute using the same application.

Recruitment efforts were somewhat successful. Twelve practitioners from seven different programs applied and were accepted. Further recruitment efforts were carried out by the PALPIN project director for two reasons: to increase the total number of participants and to increase the number of participants from areas that only had one participant. Because we had planned to have small group meetings arranged by geographical proximity, it was critical to have at least two participants close enough to each other to make meetings among them convenient. Phone calls were made to practitioners who had requested applications but had not applied. This effort was time-consuming and unsuccessful. The obstacles to participation in this region were echoed around the state during the rest of the year. Programs and participants felt swamped by Bureau-mandated activities. Especially during the early fall when programs were still waiting to hear whether they would receive extension funds and thus be required to participate in EQUAL training, many were hesitant to commit to anything extra.

Northwest/Southwest Regional Inquiry Group Format: Because of scheduling difficulties and recruitment challenges, this inquiry group was not able to have its first meeting until January. In addition, because there were not small group clusters available to all participants, small group meetings were not realistic. These two factors were important in shaping the format for this group. Monthly meetings (January through June) were planned. However, because monthly meetings had not been the advertised meeting requirement, only four meetings were required (highly recommended); two were optional. Typically inquiry groups begin with a very general focus which encourages participants to explore issues and challenges in their practice while examining their own assumptions about teaching, learning, literacy and adults. After initial collaborative explorations participants then move toward identifying an individual inquiry focus, planning and implementing an inquiry project. However, in this group these two aspects of an inquiry

group were folded together. Participants were encouraged to develop an inquiry question much earlier in the process and began to share data from their projects with the group almost immediately. By providing reading and writing activities around topics related to the data being shared, the group also, simultaneously engaged in the more exploratory activities typical of most inquiry groups in their early phase.

Thus at each meeting "collaborative inquiry" activities were implemented (by engaging in activities related to readings from the research literature distributed prior to the meeting), skills were developed for implementing inquiry projects (e.g. how to collect data, how to analyze data), and participants helped each other through the process of doing an inquiry project (by engaging in collaborative data sharing sessions).

As it turned out, participants attended the meetings that they could. Because everyone came as much as they could, the use of required and optional meetings was somewhat unnecessary. Most people attended all meetings or only missed one. We rotated meeting locations between three sites--one centrally located for the entire group, one located more conveniently for two participants who traveled the furthest, and one at the work-site of several of the participants.

Leadership development: The Northwest/Southwest inquiry group was facilitated collaboratively by the Project Director and three local leaders (one of whom had attended the Leadership Institute, the other two participated in a half-day training provided for them by the Project Director), Debbie Thompson, Michelle Joyce and Sue Evans. The local leaders took a lead role in planning meeting agendas and facilitating activities at meetings. In addition, they were each matched with group participants whom they mentored through the process. This mentoring included help in developing an inquiry question, planning and facilitating data sharing sessions, and responding to drafts of the final project. They were also responsible for checking in with the mentees when optional meetings were missed.

b. Central-Northeast

The Central-Northeast PDC had practitioners participate in local PALPIN activities in four ways: a regional, face-to-face group (Group 1), an on-line group (Group 2), an independent study (Group 3), and Inquiry 101 meetings.

Planning: Because the overall format for the Central-Northeast region had worked relatively well in the previous year, we did not plan any major changes in recruitment or format for this year. **Some minor changes were planned based on suggestions from previous participants.

Recruitment and application process: Recruitment was carried out primarily through PDC efforts. The PDC coordinator included PALPIN recruitment materials in a packet of information on professional development activities. In addition, former participants received recruitment materials and were asked to pass them along to colleagues who might want to participate. Interested practitioners completed the PALPIN application and submitted a commitment and recommendation form from their supervisors.

Recruitment efforts again met with limited success. Ten applications from four programs were submitted. However, only five practitioners actually participated. This region encountered similar obstacles to participation as in the previous year: limited access to e-mail (a requirement for participation in a group that uses e-mail to cut down on the number of meetings and amount of travel), and great distances and treacherous winter roads making even few required meetings difficult to attend. In addition, just as in other regions, we heard many concerns about getting involved in "something extra" when so many new initiatives and mandates were coming from the Bureau.

Central-Northeast Regional Inquiry Group Formats:

Group 1

Although four, day-long meetings and e-mail activities between meetings were planned, the year turned out quite differently. Again, due to scheduling conflicts with the many professional development activities taking place in the late fall (especially EQUAL training), the first meeting could not be scheduled until January. However, it was canceled

due to bad weather. A "make-up" meeting was scheduled for the next week, but was sparsely attended due to more bad weather. The first meeting with full participation did not take place until late February. Given this slow and late start, monthly meetings were scheduled for the remainder of the program year.

As in the Northwest/Southwest inquiry group, the shortened time span for meetings forced an almost immediate focus on inquiry projects. Data sharing sessions, a key activity in inquiry groups usually reserved for the second half of the year after participants have begun their inquiry projects, were begun almost immediately as well. Because the group met monthly (which is considered relatively often), the use of e-mail was not a crucial factor in the group activities. Its use was limited.

While participants in all groups this year were encouraged to complete a first draft of their project write-ups with enough time to receive feedback and do revisions before the final due date, this group established a useful structure for ensuring that this would happen. Each group member had a "buddy" to whom she e-mailed sections of her paper for feedback. In addition, the facilitators also provided responses to drafts of all participants. In this way, each person received help in at least two ways. Group facilitators felt that this structure helped participants to complete their papers and to do so at a higher quality than average.

Leadership development: This group was facilitated by a PALPIN staff member, Sandy Harrill and a local leader (who attended the leadership institute), Kathy Gleockner. In addition the group had a participant who was involved in PALPIN for a second year, Pat Pisaneschi. The original design had called for small group meetings between the four, day-long meetings of the whole group. In anticipation of this, Pat and another second year person who planned to participate (but did not due to personal circumstances) had a half-day, local leadership training so that they could function effectively as small group leaders. However, this extra leadership was not needed because the group was small and meetings

were more frequent than anticipated. Pat did help other participants from her program with material they missed when they were unable to attend.

Group 2

Two PALPIN applicants from this region were geographically isolated from the rest of the group and felt unable to travel to meetings at a site selected for the convenience of the remainder of the group. In order to address their interest, it was decided that a special on-line-only group facilitated by the Project Director would be implemented. After an initial, face-to-face get acquainted meeting at the PAACE Mid-winter conference, this group held its meetings in an AOL chat room. The group met four times this way and shared journal entries by e-mail. The group also used "low-tech" strategies for working together. The facilitator spoke individually to the participants by telephone several times and the US mail was used to circulate readings and other materials. Although the facilitator encouraged participants to engage in collaborative inquiry strategies before selecting an inquiry question and implementing a project, they were eager to begin this work and did so almost immediately following an initial orientation to the process.

This group met with limited and varied success. The work of this group was extremely project-centered. This focus, along with the challenges of basing all the work of the group in text, limited participants in their opportunities to use a wide variety of inquiry strategies to help them develop an inquiry approach to their work. However, the implementation of an inquiry project is a powerful and important aspect of inquiry groups and has the potential to make a significant impact on practice. Each participant did have this experience.

While the facilitator was dissatisfied with the group's opportunities for using inquiry as an approach to professional development, it is not clear what impact these limitations had on actual outcomes. The inquiry projects of the two participants varied in quality considerably, indicating possibly that it is not only the delivery of inquiry as professional development that matters as the effort, interest and possibly even the

disposition of the participants. Some people find this kind of work a more natural fit than others.

Group 3

One Central-Northeast practitioner who had previously participated in a Winter Inquiry Institute expressed interest in implementing an inquiry project. However, she did not want to repeat her participation in the Institute (it would have been very repetitive) and could not attend the regional inquiry group meetings. She requested permission to complete an inquiry project as an independent study. Because she expressed interest in getting started on her project long before the on-line only group began, this seemed to be the only option. While professional community is considered a critical feature of practitioner inquiry and her involvement would not include this aspect, the project director felt it was more important to encourage her interest in whatever way possible than to force her to attend a group. Working with the help of a local facilitator, she planned and implemented her project. She also participated some in on-line discussions involving Group 1.

Inquiry 101

In an effort to boost participation in PALPIN, increase understanding of the inquiry process and improve recruitment in future years, we decided that it might be helpful to make introductions to inquiry available at program sites. This effort was dubbed, "Inquiry 101."

Recruitment: Programs in the region received a fax and a follow-up letter inviting them to take advantage of "Inquiry 101." This recruitment information gave a very general definition of inquiry, and described what "Inquiry 101" could offer their programs, and what they needed to do to participate. Four programs accepted the invitation, a total of 21 practitioners participated.

Format: The "Inquiry 101" format included a combination of introductory/ orientation information regarding practitioner inquiry and several hands-on activities

designed to give participants experience with the kinds of learning opportunities available in inquiry groups. These included community building through discussions of professional challenges and concerns, and examining assumptions about teaching and learning as a first step in rethinking practice. The meeting concluded with a discussion of opportunities for participating in inquiry groups in the future. Following this portion of the agenda, participants had the option to stay and work with facilitators to plan the implementation of a mini-inquiry project. Upon completion of a mini-project, participants were eligible to receive a $100 stipend. Ten participants did so.

In spite of this very slight involvement with inquiry, we believe that there was a pay-off. PALPIN's recruitment efforts in the following year were boosted by participants in "Inquiry 101" meetings. Furthermore, the mini-projects seemed quite valuable to the participants and the write-ups were of good quality.

The down-side of such an effort is that it is very labor intensive for PALPIN staff, involving considerable time and money for travel.

c. Southeast

In the Southeast region, three inquiry groups met. Two were program-based and one was cross-program involving practitioners from two programs that work in close proximity. Practitioners from each of the programs pursued collaborative inquiry projects.

Planning: Minimal amounts of planning were needed to initiate these three groups. Group 1 at the Adult Literacy Center of the Lehigh Valley was a continuation from the previous year. Practitioners at this program had been unable to complete their projects by the end of the program year and elected to carry-over their work into a second year. Group 2 at the Adult Enrichment Center was composed of several practitioners who had participated in an inquiry project during the previous year. With some shifts in participation (some elected not to continue, some new practitioners joined the group), this group decided to complete a second collaborative inquiry project. Only Group 3, made up of practitioners from Reading Area Community College and Literacy Council of Reading-

Berks was an entirely new endeavor. Both programs had applied to participate in PALPIN during the previous year. Due to staffing shortages, however, they were not able to begin until this year.

Recruitment and application: Recruitment for the groups was conducted internally in each organization. Each agency was required to submit an application to the PDC. This application had two parts: one portion was completed by the program administrator and the other was completed by each practitioner who planned participate in the inquiry group. No further recruitment was conducted in this region.

Inquiry Group Formats:

Group 1 had only one formal meeting during this program year. The agenda for this meeting was designed to provide participants with strategies for finishing up their projects and to plan how this might actually happen. Some e-mail contact continued between participants and the facilitator during the remainder of the year. The group project was completed in the late spring.

Group 2 was a program-based group composed of four practitioners who teach ABE and GED classes in their program. Three of the participants were involved in implementing a collaborative inquiry project during the previous year. This group met monthly October through April. Early meeting agendas focused on planning and identifying a common theme and discussing data collection methods. Subsequent meetings included time for progress reports on projects, sharing instructional insights and teaching strategies, discussions of readings related to GED instruction and sharing of data using structured conversations typical of inquiry groups. Each member of the group investigated a similar general question related to improving the learning outcomes of students. However, individual projects focused on different aspects of the instructional context. Thus, the final project includes a collaboratively written introduction and conclusion and individual papers which report on the specific areas on which each participant focused.

Group 3 was ultimately composed of five practitioners from Reading Area Community College (RACC) and three practitioners (two additional practitioners began the process, but one chose not to complete and the other was dismissed from his job during the year) from the Literacy Council of Reading-Berks. This group met monthly, September through June. In addition, the facilitator met with participants from the literacy council on three additional occasions.

In their original applications, each program described a possible inquiry focus. The RACC group wrote that they wanted to focus on the challenges involved in their rolling admissions (open-entry/open-exit) policy. The Literacy Council group decided that they wanted to focus on pronunciation issues in teaching and tutoring ESL. In their early meetings, both of these topics were discussed. Through these discussions, however, the Literacy Council group decided that they, too, wanted to focus on the open-entry/open-exit issue. The facilitator reports that "having the same inquiry topic for both programs made our limited time together more focused." Activities at meetings followed a pattern similar to those of most inquiry groups. These included sharing time, discussion of articles, data sharing and specific training on how to do inquiry projects.

These two groups used an alternative approach to report writing. Although all participants in the group were involved in data collection and analysis, only one person from each program was actually responsible for writing their reports.

The facilitator notes that the group engaged in many meaningful and stimulating activities which helped participants reflect on and consider various aspects of an open-entry/open- exit policy. However, she feels that because the groups knew what they wanted to inquire into from the start, they were so eager to get into the doing the actual project that they avoided really looking at some of the issues that are at the heart of the matter. While this kind of progression through the work "makes the work eminently relevant to the participants which is critical, I think that in our haste we sometimes miss the opportunity to consider some of the broader issues [involved]."

Leadership Development: Group 1 was facilitated by the project director.

Group 2 was facilitated by a member of the group, Barb Tyndall. Barb was a member of an inquiry group during PALPIN's first year and facilitated her program-based group the next year. This was her second year facilitating. In response to a suggestion from the PDC coordinator, some additional support was provided to her. The project director attended the first meeting of the group, responded to requests for readings on particular topics and occasionally checked in with Barb. In addition, Susan Miller, a PDC staff person who attended the Inquiry Leadership Institute worked with her to provide similar kinds of support and to help her plan data sharing sessions--an inquiry strategy that Barb had not previously used. It was agreed that, despite her two years of experience as a facilitator, she would benefit from participating in the next leadership institute. In addition, Barb informally encouraged a group member, Margaret Giordano to take on some co-facilitating responsibilities as a way of developing leadership within the group. Both Margaret and Barb plan to attend the 1998 Leadership Institute.

Group 3 was facilitated by Susan Finn Miller, a PDC staff person. Susan had participated in a regional inquiry group and co-facilitated a program-based group in the previous year. She participated in the Inquiry Leadership Institute in the fall. She facilitated this group with some help from PALPIN staff. Susan utilized e-mail and the telephone to seek such support.

d. South-Central

Planning, recruitment and application: There was only one leader, Judy Sides, available in this region. Her capacity and time to travel was limited, therefore she was able to facilitate one group close to her work-site. In spite of efforts to recruit several participants from several programs, only one program chose to participate in what became a program-based inquiry group. The Harrisburg State Hospital inquiry group was begun in response to interest generated at an advisory board meeting where Judy discussed her experiences with PALPIN.

Inquiry group format: Five members of the hospital staff participated in a project focused on developing a money management and telephone skills curriculum which could address the needs of clients to be discharged from long-term care and who are functioning at a wide range of literacy levels (Community Hospital Integration Project Program--CHIPPS). Beginning in October, the group met monthly. They began the year by reading a number of sample inquiry projects and discussing the content of these papers. Participants also did some data collection almost immediately. In addition, the facilitator always planned at least one collaborative inquiry activity designed to open up participants' thinking about various topics.

In the spring, the group moved in a more focused way toward their goal of curriculum development. However, the group came to realize that developing a curriculum was over-ambitious within the given time-frame. They decided to focus instead on "how students absorbed and retained the information that we were teaching them" (from final report). The facilitator gave them an example of a form her program uses to organize and document learner's progress toward attaining specific goals. The participants liked this model, and started developing a similar form which would address their specific needs and interests. They also began to collect data which would inform the process of laying out a usable curriculum to be used with CHIPPS program learners. The data collection process consisted primarily of interviews with administrators, social workers, group home workers, current patients and patients who had been discharged. Some of the participants also kept journals. Over several months, the form was refined as participants gained a deeper understanding of learners' needs.

Each participant in the group contributed one section to the final paper. These sections include a two-page summary of the group's work as well as the individual's data collection strategies, findings and implications. Each person also included data (or summaries of the data) that she collected. What data got collected was unique to each person (i.e. participants didn't each collect the same data from different people).

Leadership development: This group was facilitated by Judy Sides. Judy had been a participant in a regional inquiry group and then helped to facilitate at a Winter Inquiry Institute. This was her first experience facilitating a group on her own. The project director checked in with her periodically, helped her work through issues and concerns, and provided her with some readings for the group to use. Most support was provided by telephone and US mail.

2. Fall Inquiry Institute

a. Planning

The Winter Inquiry Institute during the first year of PALPIN was planned by three Philadelphia practitioners and the Project Director who had all participated in and taken leadership in past ALPIP activities. The design was extremely successful and was repeated in the second year of the project with only some minor modifications made in response to suggestions from Year 1 participants, to reflect spontaneous events that had occurred at the first Institute, and/or to better achieve Institute goals as assessed by the Project Director. The major change in design for this third Institute was moving it from January to the fall. Late October was chosen as a new time for the Institute for several reasons. First, we hoped that by holding the institute earlier in the year, participants would have more time to implement inquiry projects and complete higher quality final reports. Second, we wanted to use an actual inquiry group as a "training ground" for facilitators in training--the Fall Institute seemed best suited to this purpose. Thus the Inquiry Leadership and Inquiry Institutes were held simultaneously. In order to best utilize the skills of these new leaders during the rest of the year, we wanted them to have their training experience as early as possible. Third, we wanted to hold it late enough so that classes and programs would have time to settle down after the new school-year rush was over.

b. Recruitment and application process.

Recruitment followed a similar pattern to that established during year 1 of the project. Fliers about the Institute and an article about practitioner inquiry were distributed

to the PDC Coordinators who then disseminated them to programs in their regions. In addition, a letter from the state director, Cheryl Keenan, urging participation was sent to practitioners around the state. In addition, participants from the first Institute were encouraged to contact colleagues to alert them to this professional development opportunity. Interested practitioners were required to submit an application similar to the one used the previous year.

Recruitment was fairly successful (although our numbers were down from the previous year). Fourteen applications were received and all applicants were accepted. Five of the six regions were represented (no participants attended from the Southeast region). Twelve programs were represented. Nearly half of the group came from the two western-most regions of the state; about a third of the group came from Philadelphia. We had one participant from Massachusetts whose job responsibilities were to include coordinating inquiry activities for the state.

c. Fall Inquiry Institute Format

The Fall Inquiry Institute format was very similar to that developed for the previous years. For each of the first three days of the four-day institute, the day was divided into three parts. In the morning, participants explored particular topics in the field--learner-centered education, reading and writing, and dealing with differences--using a variety of collaborative oral inquiry strategies. Following lunch, participants met in small journal groups to write and discuss their responses to a focusing question, following up on the morning activities, which asked participants to relate discussion and readings to their own practice. The afternoon agenda focused on particular aspects and strategies for executing practitioner inquiry projects. One the first day, interviewing as a form of data collection was discussed. In addition, participants in the Inquiry Leadership Institute shared their experiences with doing inquiry projects. Facilitators met with participants individually to plan data sharing sessions for days two and three of the Institute. On the second day, a participant in the Leadership Institute shared data collected from a current inquiry project

and then participants presented data they had brought with them to the Institute from their work. On the third day, more participants shared data and the use of observation and field notes was discussed as a data collection strategy. During the second and third day, facilitators met individually with participants to assist them in preliminary plans for inquiry projects to be completed at home. The fourth day (a half day) was devoted primarily to making final plans for implementing inquiry projects "back home." This year an activity to assist participants in understanding and implementing data analysis strategies was added to the fourth day. This agenda change was made based on feedback from participants and outside observers (e.g. PDC staff) and observations of final reports done by PALPIN staff which indicated that participants needed more help with this aspect of their projects. The activity was an adaptation of one that PALPIN facilitators had learned about at a summer institute sponsored by the National Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (NALPIN) from facilitators of the Georgia Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (GALPIN), participants at this institute.

d. Leadership development

Facilitation of the Fall Inquiry Institute was collaboratively done by the PALPIN Project Director, Coordinator and participants in the Inquiry Leadership Institute. Participants were involved in all aspects of facilitation and leadership at the Institute. Leaders-in-training also helped participants plan the inquiry projects they would do when they returned to their programs and made a commitment to do follow-up with them during the rest of the year.

e. Follow-up

Based on the first two years of the Institute, several forms of follow-up were planned into this year's routines. These plans were shared with the group and included: the production of at least two newsletters (three were completed), the sharing of and responding to data emerging from participants' projects by mail (to be reported on in the second newsletter), and contact with Institute participants by facilitators. Because there

was a critical mass of participants from the two western regions, they were able to meet again in one face-to-face meeting after the Institute. This group reported that they shared data together and provided feedback on each other's project work. Participants who requested it, received feedback to final project drafts.

3. Other activities

a. Inquiry Leadership Institute

The first PALPIN Inquiry Leadership Institute was held in conjunction with the Fall Inquiry Institute.

Planning: Planning for the Inquiry Leadership was done by the Project Director and PALPIN Coordinator. However, feedback from informally trained leaders from the previous year was a critical factor in planning decisions.

Recruitment: All previous PALPIN participants received a letter during the summer alerting them to the possibility of participating in the Leadership Institute. Because we had no idea what kind of interest there would be in participating, this letter was a "feeler" to help us think about several issues including to what extent we would need to be selective of applicants, and formats and structures (depending on likely number of participants) for the Institute. The letter asked those that were interested to request an application, but made clear that such a request did not imply on obligation on either their part or PALPIN's. Fifteen former PALPIN participants responded that they were interested. Applications were sent to each person. Ten applications were actually submitted. This seemed like a very strongly positive response, but it was unclear how to integrate this many leaders-in-training into the Fall Inquiry Institute format. However, as the Institute grew near, a number of applicants withdrew due to personal problems or unforeseen demands at work. In the end, five people participated in the Leadership Institute.

Inquiry Leadership Institute Format: The Leadership Institute began one day prior to the start of the Fall Institute and concluded a half day after it. The first day was used to get acquainted, do orientation, plan who would do what during the Fall Institute, provide

some direct training, and practice facilitation skills. During the three and a half days of the Fall Institute, Leadership Institute participants took turns facilitating activities. They also worked with participants one-on-one to plan presentations and develop inquiry project action plans. Leadership participants met with the PALPIN Project Director and Coordinator during lunch breaks and journal group times (when Inquiry Institute participants were working in small groups) to debrief facilitating experiences, discuss challenges and questions, and problem solve. The concluding half-day was used to talk about participants' leadership involvement for the remainder of the year, ways of supporting each other's work, and remaining questions and concerns.

Each Leadership Institute participant was strongly encouraged to plan and implement an inquiry project of her own. This suggestion was made on the assumption that the more experience she has with doing inquiry projects, the better able the leader will be to help others. Completion of inquiry projects was not a requirement because of the limitations on stipends. Each leader receives a stipend for taking on leadership responsibilities, but can not receive any additional compensation for extra work (e.g. completing a project). Given this, it did not seem appropriate to require this extra task. In the end, only two participants completed projects.

All five participants did take on leadership responsibilities. Debbie Thompson co-facilitated the Northwest/Southwest Inquiry group. Susan Miller facilitated the Reading Area inquiry and provided support to the facilitator of the Adult Enrichment Center Inquiry group facilitator in the Southeast Region. Kathy Gleockner co-facilitated the Central-Northeast group. Suzanne Felix co-facilitated the Philadelphia inquiry group, ALPIP. Diane Inverso assisted the Program Evaluation Design Inquiry Group (PEDIG).

b. On-line communication

The PALPIN community was able to utilize on-line telecommunication to a greater extent during this program year than in previous years. In the Central-Northeast Regional Inquiry group, access to e-mail was a requirement of participation. E-mail was one mode

of communication in this group. In addition, a chat room was used for virtual meetings of a second, small inquiry group in this region. Leaders around the state used e-mail to keep in touch with each other and with the project director. It was also used for various kinds of planning and recruitment. There has been yet again another jump from the second to the third years of PALPIN in the number of practitioners around the state who have access to e-mail. On-line communication was also more heavily utilized in contact between the Project Director and the PDC coordinators and the ABLE Bureau staff. It is important to note, however, that in almost every group there were participants who did not have access to e-mail. If just one person does not have this means of communication, it can block the entire group from using it. There are still a significant number of practitioners around the state who can not use technology to enhance their opportunities for professional development and who can not, therefore, overcome barriers to participation related to distance and time.

c. Other cross-state inquiry events

The 1998 PAACE Mid-winter Conference provided an opportunity for an annual practitioner inquiry network meeting. A pre-conference session was organized, to which all PALPIN participants (past and present) were invited. Those who attended had the opportunity to share the outcomes of their inquiry work with other practitioners and discuss their work in progress. The challenges and opportunities of creating diverse kinds of inquiry communities around the state was also discussed. In addition, the participants took part in a data sharing session. Lastly, practitioners who attended the pre-conference session used this forum for discussing current "hot topics" in the field including standards and the EQUAL process.

These activities were designed as an opportunity for practitioners from around the state to meet, share inquiry strategies, processes and outcomes; engage in cross-site inquiry activities; brainstorm and problem solve issues, questions and concerns occurring within local inquiry communities; and function as a long range recruitment tool. These activities

also provided practitioners engaged in inquiry throughout the state with an opportunity to build and strengthen collegial relationships, share new knowledge generated through inquiry and build capacity for engaging in and leading inquiry activities around the state.

Proposals were submitted for four different sessions. Three were accepted. One session was a collaboration between PA-ARN and PALPIN and was designed to help attendees understand more about the Learning from Practice Initiative as well as some of the distinctive features of each activity. A second session was a panel presentation entitled "Issues in program management." Three PALPIN participants presented findings from their inquiry projects. The PALPIN Project Director moderated this event. A third session, "The Descriptive Review" was a hands-on activity which demonstrated one of the inquiry strategies used in PALPIN groups. A PALPIN participant presented a learner with whom she works using a richly detailed descriptive structure developed by Pat Carini and teachers at the Prospect school; the PALPIN Coordinator facilitated this session. Participants ask clarifying questions which help fill out the picture of the learner and make recommendations based on the presenters "focusing question," their own experiences, and their understanding of the learner. One proposal was not accepted. Informally known as "Inquiry 101," this session had been offered the previous year. It was designed as both a formal presentation and a hands-on experience for practitioners who want to learn more about inquiry.

These PALPIN sessions were designed to share new knowledge generated through the process of inquiry, provide hands-on opportunities to experience inquiry activities, build professional community (albeit short-term), and recruit participants for future PALPIN activities.

d. Development of a guide to support practitioner inquiry

The Inquiry Facilitator's Handbook was drafted and revised this year. An early draft was distributed to participants in the Inquiry Leadership Institute. They used it throughout the Institute and during the remainder of the year as they took up leadership

positions around the state. They were also able to provide feedback on its applications to the primary author of the Handbook, Sandy Harrill. Revisions were completed by the end of the year. A working/final draft will be available in the coming year.

The Handbook is written for use by PALPIN Leaders who have participated in an inquiry group and leadership training and are taking up leadership positions with the help and support of PALPIN staff. However, we believe that there will be considerable interest in the handbook from facilitators in other states (some have already expressed interest). It will remain to be seen what the applicability of the Handbook will be for users in different contexts.

e. Other presentations

PALPIN was again represented this year at the Ethnography in Education Conference at the University of Pennsylvania. Three PALPIN facilitators gave a panel presentation entitled "Building and sustaining an on-line community." This talk outlined strategies used in the Central-Northeast inquiry group the previous year in which one of the primary modes for doing collaborative inquiry work was e-mail. The talk was well attended and generated a very lively discussion among panelists and participants. Please see the 1997-98 PALPIN Final Report for more information on this inquiry group.

Findings: What can be learned from these activities

The findings from the 1997-98 PALPIN program year are consistent with those of the first two years of the project. To reiterate, the findings were as follows:

- PALPIN has the flexibility to meet the needs of practitioners in diverse contexts
- The long distance many practitioners had to travel to participate and the limited time available to them provided challenges but they were not insurmountable. However, accommodating these challenges meant holding fewer meetings.
- The process of practitioner inquiry needs a great deal of support
- The staff development opportunity in PALPIN is not just to be found in the completion of an inquiry project. Rather, it is the many small and large group and individual activities which occur along the way, in addition to the completion of an inquiry project, which help practitioners develop an inquiry stance on their practice.
- Potential leadership has emerged

- The experience this year in PALPIN is consistent with the research findings which documented the work of ALPIP during its first two years (See Lytle, Belzer and Reumann, 1993 and Lytle, Belzer, Cantafio, Reumann and Barry, 1994).

- On-line communication can be successfully used to implement some inquiry activities, but it can not and should not entirely replace face-to-face interactions in inquiry groups.

- There is a need for formal leadership development/training.

- Although most PALPIN participants complete inquiry projects and write them up in a final report, practitioners typically need more help, more support and time than is available during the program year to polish their papers for dissemination.

Please see the 1996 and 1997 PALPIN Final Reports for details on these findings.

In addition to the findings above, the innovations during the third year of the project--a leadership institute, "Inquiry 101,"--and the growth of PALPIN to a truly statewide initiative have yielded additional findings.

1. While there is a substantial amount of interest in assuming leadership roles among PALPIN participants, the time commitment involved in participating in training and assuming leadership responsibilities is such that only a limited number of practitioners can do so.

The high number of respondents to the Inquiry Leadership Institute "feeler" letter indicated a substantial level of interest in developing leadership skills and assuming leadership responsibility. However, by the time the Leadership Institute was actually held, only one-third of the original responders actually participated. We know why those that applied and then withdrew did not participate (personal and/or work obligations), but we know only some about why those who requested applications did not actually apply. We know almost nothing about those who did not request applications. In general, it seems clear that a major obstacles was the time commitment involved to attend the Institute and then to take on leadership responsibilities.

While it seems a simple thing to think about ways to make the Leadership Institute shorter, the more informal leadership development done in the previous year seemed inadequate to leaders in training, PDC staff and PALPIN staff. Thus, the more intense experience of the Inquiry Leadership Institute was born. The participants at this year's

Leadership Institute were both new and experienced leaders. However, those experienced leaders who participated, noted that this kind of training made a tremendous positive difference in their skills and capacity to facilitate and lead inquiry activities. Therefore, it seems difficult to find ways to shorten leadership training.

The building of leadership capacity around the state is critical for three reasons: 1) In response to the Bureau-directed trend toward decentralization, a cadre of leaders working at the local level is needed; 2) the more local leadership PALPIN has, the more it can be responsive to the needs and interests of the local context (a critical feature of practitioner inquiry; and 3) as the PALPIN network grows, more and more leadership is needed to support the many activities it offers. It is PALPIN's goal for the future that each region will have a number of practitioners to whom they can turn that have the skills, experience and confidence to plan, develop and implement inquiry activities at the regional level.

Clearly, leadership development is important to the future of PALPIN. However, in addition to the difficulty of attending the Institute, leadership responsibilities extend beyond those several days. There are some very real challenges involved in taking on this responsibility for most practitioners. Some are more intractable than others. First, is the "time/money" issue. Unless there is adequate money to "purchase" leaders' time, there will always be a limited number of practitioners who have the flexibility to take on leadership responsibilities. At this point programs and individuals are, in a sense, donating some time to make this possible. This kind of commitment, can not be counted on on the scale that will be needed to make the transition to a completely decentralized structure or a larger network of activities and participants. The second challenge is related to the first and is the "nature of the workforce" issue. Because so many practitioners are part-time (and are often working other jobs), there are a very limited number of people who have time that can be purchased. Third, is the "instability in the field" issue. Inquiry leadership is challenging, but people get better at it over time. According to new leaders, one year as a participant and

one year as a leader is just enough time to begin to take it all in. However, staff and administrative turn-over makes it difficult to count on much consistency in leadership over time. There is no obvious solution to this problem if our leadership is to come directly from the field. Fourth, is the "experience with research" issue. The ideal mixture of skills in an inquiry leader includes experience as a researcher (e.g. as a graduate student). Although not mandatory, it does seem extremely helpful to have such experience to draw on in assisting others in planning and implementing inquiry projects. There is not much to be done to encourage such leadership because it would limit the potential pool even further.

Obviously there are no simple solutions to these challenges. However, it is important to remain cognizant of them as we continue to build the PALPIN network. As the number of leaders grows there will also be questions related to quality control and supervision.

2. Although the intensity and continuity of inquiry group experiences is a unique and powerful feature of this professional development opportunity, shorter, less extensive inquiry opportunities also seem to have benefits.

"Inquiry 101" meetings were offered primarily as a recruitment tool. When they were planned, not much thought was given to participant outcomes. Most of the thought went into how to help practitioners understand and get excited about practitioner inquiry so that they would want to take part in it in a "real" inquiry group the following year. We were pleasantly surprised by the quality of mini-projects implemented and by the final reports. With very brief exposure to inquiry as a form of staff development, participants seemed to catch on quite well to the idea of investigating questions from their practice in an intentional and systematic way.

Because "Inquiry 101" seemingly got a big bang for the buck (not necessarily in terms of financial investment, but certainly in terms of time investment). This seems to indicate the power of inquiry as a professional development tool. Practitioners who participate are very responsive to opportunities to think harder about their practice and learn a great deal even when they take a very short, quick look at something going on in their

work. They are also very pleased to have the opportunity to talk to each other about substantive issues in their practice. Practitioner inquiry addresses a need and interest of practitioners. Even very slight opportunities to engage in systematic inquiry seem to invite this type of learning opportunity.

This is not to say that we should think about streamlining inquiry activities. Rather, it suggests the power and appropriateness of the model. Instead of arguing that a little bit goes a long way, we suggest that if a little bit goes a long way, imagine what more could accomplish! We need to continue to seek ways to integrate inquiry into the work of individuals and programs and the wider professional development system so that practitioners can practically take advantage of intensity and continuity in this form of staff development. In the meantime, if all else fails we should take every opportunity to find short-term, easily accessible opportunities to integrate inquiry into the work lives of practitioners.

3. Professional development initiatives like PALPIN will have increasing difficulty with recruitment in a professional development system that has many mandated or strongly recommended activities.

This was a year of explosive growth in the ABLE professional development system. In addition to all the initiatives and activities available previously, the initiation of wide-scale EQUAL training, technology training and the training modules meant a great variety of choices and requirements for participation. While not all of these additions were mandatory, most were (or were felt to be). According to reports from the field, programs felt stretched thin by what they viewed as competing demands for participation in professional development and were anxious about new requirements involved in EQUAL and performance standards. While it is clear to PALPIN staff and some PDC and Bureau staff how practitioner inquiry could support and complement many of these activities, this connection was rarely made at the program level. Many programs are taxed to the limit in terms of personnel resources. Therefore, even programs that place a strong value on professional development had to make choices about in which activities to participate.

Support at the Bureau level for PALPIN has been outstanding. Past participants sing the praises of practitioner inquiry. Yet, recruitment is a huge effort with only limited payback. Practitioner inquiry is professional development that requires substantial time and intellectual commitment. Many practitioners do not feel they can make such a time commitment. Others may want to, but feel Bureau requirements place PALPIN low on a list of priorities. In order for PALPIN to continue to be viable, recruitment will be an issue. Recruitment will continue to be a challenge until some of the other professional development activity has died down and/or until practitioners and program managers can understand the links between practitioner inquiry and other Bureau activities. These links may need to be made explicit via Bureau policy or other "public relations" measures.

Outcomes:

In the 1995-96 PALPIN Final Report, the outcomes section focused on participant reported impacts of participating in inquiry groups. These included becoming more reflective and problem solving about work; changing and initiating new practices, perceptions and interactions about and with learners and colleagues; and participating in a professional/intellectual community. These outcomes were determined through analyzing final inquiry projects, response sheets collected at the end of each meeting, and an end-of-year survey.

The 1996-97 Final Report outcomes section focused on an analysis of the nature of participants' inquiries. In every case, projects represented as a primary concern a sincere interest in improving classroom practice, program management and structures and/or service delivery. Inquiry questions grew out of interests, needs and concerns in participants' day-to-day practice and reflected the uniqueness of their work-places, job positions, students served, class levels and subject areas taught. Yet, the projects also reflected some common themes, interests and concerns. These included gathering information from learners or colleagues to inform changes in practice, gaining a deeper understanding of learners' experiences or perceptions, understanding what happens when

an innovation is implemented, or investigating a particular problem to understand it better (thus leading to implications for change).

Please see the 1996 and 1997 PALPIN Final Reports for details on these outcomes. The outcomes in this third year are not significantly different than in previous years.

Conclusion

The process of building a state-wide system for delivering inquiry-based professional development was realized in this third year of PALPIN. Inquiry activities were available to practitioners in every region of the state. These activities were offered using a variety of formats and delivery systems, each adjusted and adapted to the needs of the local community and the availability of leaders. The program year was successful in many ways including along the following dimensions:

1. Recruitment

Although recruitment was a challenge, overall participation levels did rise almost 33% from the previous year (from 43 to 57 participants). If participation in "Inquiry 101" is included, the increase is substantially higher (about 81%). While some groups were not as large as anticipated, the large number of groups around the state (9), boosted overall participation. Challenges to recruitment for this year and in the long term are discussed earlier in this report.

2. Project completion rate

As in previous years, attrition was relatively low. Considering the demands placed on participants and participant reports that they often do not fully understand these demands upon entry into an inquiry group, the rate seems surprisingly good. While 57 practitioners entered an inquiry group, only seven did not continue to come to meetings and participate throughout the life of the group (about 12% attrition). The completion rate on papers was somewhat lower, however (nearly 16% did not complete). This is still a relatively low number of non-completers. Interestingly, a high number (more than half) of the Fall Inquiry Institute participants did not complete their papers. This is a considerable drop off

from previous years when a Winter Institute was held in January (rather than the October date of the Fall Institute). It is possible that part of the problem this year was the long time-frame from participation in the Institute to the date when the paper was due (early June). It was thought that a longer time frame would improve the chances of completion as well as the quality of the final product. It seemed that quite the opposite is true.

3. Leadership

Leadership development continued this year. Five practitioners participated in the Leadership Institute (two others received some leadership training but did not assume leadership responsibility), ten took on leadership responsibilities. Leaders functioned in at least two ways: as facilitators taking full responsibility for planning and implementing inquiry groups or as co-facilitators taking some responsibility for recruitment, planning, leading activities, and supporting participants. As last year, this group of leaders was made up primarily of non-teaching practitioners (only two are teachers). The others have administrative responsibilities in their programs; two are PDC staff people.

The Leadership Institute was initiated to provide a strong foundational understanding of inquiry-based professional development on both the conceptual and practical level. The development of a Facilitator's Handbook will serve as an important resource to practitioners who assume leadership responsibilities.

PALPIN has made tremendous strides in establishing itself as a professional development network. At the end of its third year, it has developed a web of practitioners across the state who use inquiry to improve their practice. These practitioners have been supported in their efforts to be more reflective about their work and have integrated some useful strategies into their repertoire for understanding challenges and analyzing the benefits and questions of innovations. They have also begun to relate to adult learners and colleagues in new and more collaborative ways. Additionally, participants have made contacts and established support networks beyond their classrooms and even their

programs. These networks extend to practitioners in programs around their region and, in some cases, around the state. As a result of this burgeoning network, change is happening at the individual, program and state level.

In its fourth year, PALPIN will look forward to strengthening participation in all regions by experimenting with new formats designed to make participation less onerous to busy practitioners who are already stretched thin. Leadership development will continue too. PALPIN will be working during this next year towards a regionalized structure. Ultimately, the Project Director will function primarily as a resource to local leaders and PDC staff and as a coordinator of state-wide activities such as the Leadership Institute, dissemination efforts and conference presentations.

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